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Pharmacy Professor Focuses on Correcting Medication Misuse

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – With more than 700,000 emergency room visits each year because of incorrect medication use, Andrew Straw, Pharm.D., assistant professor of pharmacy practice at Cedarville University, is doing something to help solve this epidemic. That's why he has introduced Medication Therapy Management (MTM) at the Rocking Horse Community Health Center (RHCHC) in Springfield.

MTM seeks to educate patients on the proper use of medication, optimize drug therapy and improve patient outcomes. As a result, Straw believes fewer people will require an emergency room visit.

"Medication Therapy Management is vital because it speaks to the importance of safe medication use," said Straw. "In many cases, the patient will not get this type of care from anyone else due to accessibility, time constraints and knowledge limitations. The pharmacist is uniquely positioned to fill this gap in the health care team."

Typically, Straw will make sure his patients are taking their medication as prescribed and verify if they are following proper health and wellness guidelines. He also checks for negative reactions to the medications.

Part of Straw's role in MTM includes anticoagulation, or managing medication for patients who are at risk for blood clots, certain heart conditions or stroke. Blood that is not clotting properly because of medication can result in dangerous outcomes that range from excessive bleeding to blood clots in the legs or lungs.

For the last three months, Straw has focused primarily on diabetes management.

"I work one-on-one with patients to get to know their history with diabetes, what medication they've taken, what they're taking now and how they feel as a result" said Straw. "I've learned that when you give patients that one-on-one time from week to week, you begin to build a relationship of trust, which completely empowers them."

What drew Straw to the area of diabetes was the role and expertise he could bring as a pharmacist in a clinical setting.

"Diabetes has so many medications to choose from, that it requires careful balance of many factors, and personalizing each regimen to uniquely fit the patient I'm treating," said Straw. "This role requires a lot of personal connection and collaboration, which is important to me as a pharmacist."

RHCHC is now an Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) rotation site for students who are in their fourth year of the professional pharmacy program at Cedarville.

Professional pharmacy students have collaborated with Straw to write the original medication management protocol now implemented at RHCHC. The protocol lays out the responsibilities of the pharmacist, algorithms to change medication, treatment goals and steps to get patients back on track if their medication has not been taken properly.

Looking ahead, Straw plans to stay at the clinic and expand his reach as a pharmacist. His ultimate goal is creating a service linking his role at RHCHC and Springfield Regional Hospital, where he also works.

"The university is providing the clinic with many resources, and I think this reflects back on the drive we have to care for the community," said Straw.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,760 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 100 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.